



SRC CALENDAR

Monday, March 6 – Thursday, March 9

- 9 a.m. Senate session, caucus, possible evenings
(**Sine die March 9**)

SRC IN THE NEWS

On the new Senate Bill 6885, the bipartisan agreement on unemployment insurance: "I think there's something in this compromise for everyone," said **Sen. Linda Evans Parlette**, R-Wenatchee. "It's a tremendous, positive step to try and get a balance." (AP, 3-3-06)

On the Senate approving a supplemental operating budget: "...the Senate ignored two perfectly valid proposals from **Sen. Joe Zarelli**, R-Ridgefield: to designate 1 percent of state revenue for a 'rainy day fund' to use in emergencies; and to abolish the costly 'gain-sharing' plan that would direct excess dividends from pension investments back into pension enhancements." (The Columbian, 2-17-06)

On Democrats killing Republican proposals to limit the use of eminent domain: "But Republican **Sen. Don Benton** accused Democrats of ducking the responsibility to protect the most fundamental of American rights. 'It will be one of the tragedies of this session if we don't deal with it,' said Benton, R-Vancouver." (Tacoma News Tribune, 2-27-06)

On final passage of a bill cracking down on driving schools in the state: "**Sen. Cheryl Pflug**, R-Maple Valley, said her 16-year-old son would show up at the driving school and no instructors were there. 'This is an industry that deserves some oversight,' Pflug said." (Tacoma News Tribune, 3-1-06)

On final legislative approval of a bill that makes it a Class C felony to buy or sell a person's cell phone records without that person's permission: "'It's shocking that, for a small fee, anyone could legally find out who you've been calling and how long you talked to them,' bill sponsor **Sen. Bill Finkbeiner**, R-Kirkland, said." (Olympian, 3-2-06)

Headline of the Week: "**Democrats shut down efforts to affirm state's constitution**" (Seattle P-I, 2-27-06)

MAKING OUR COMMUNITIES SAFER

Roughly 40,000 people in Washington are arrested on DUI charges each year according to the Washington State Patrol. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) says Washington is one of just six states where a DUI is classified as a gross misdemeanor regardless of how many times the person has been convicted of driving drunk or drugged.

So it was surprising and disappointing when Senate Democrats killed HB 3317 which would have made a **fifth DUI arrest** in a seven-year period a Class C felony. The House approved the bill by the rather lopsided margin of 97-0. Republicans attempted to catch the bill "on the fly" from the House and bring it to an immediate vote, but Senate leadership refused and sent the measure to the Judiciary Committee where it was pronounced dead. In Oregon, felony charges kick in on the fourth arrest. In Idaho, even a second offense can be prosecuted as a felony if the driver has a very high blood alcohol level. There were **222 families in Washington** that lost a loved one to drunk driving last year.

REAL HEALTH CARE REFORM

Health care insurance coverage is becoming increasingly rare at smaller businesses, but Senate Republicans were successful in tacking on amendments to a bill that provide incentives and flexibility to businesses and the insurance industry alike to **encourage broader coverage**.

Sens. Linda Evans Parlette and Alex Deccio introduced amendments to E2SHB 2572 that were accepted by the majority on the floor. Deccio's amendment provides subsidies for individuals who have health savings accounts (HSAs). Parlette's amendments allow health insurers to offer a mandate-free plan, provide a tax incentive for small employers who provide health care for their employees, and eliminate the requirement that subsidized plans be equivalent to the more costly Basic Health Plan. The Senate approved the amended bill 42-5 and sent it back to the House for consideration.

Senate Republican Caucus Communications - To submit an item or correction, contact Rebecca Japhet at Japhet.Rebecca@leg.wa.gov or (360) 786-7516.